

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** - Yesterday, the House Subcommittee on Water and Power discussed H.R. 2498, the San Joaquin Valley Regional Water bill, authored by Congressman Jim Costa (D-Fresno). This bill would authorize a study to develop a progressive integrated regional water plan for the San Joaquin River and Tulare Lake Hydrologic Regions. The study would render a solution-oriented regional plan that will focus on increasing our supply of water, provide solutions to address water quality issues, look at better ways to mitigate environmental issues, and solutions for long-term flood control. This study would be done at the California Water Institute, located at California State University, Fresno.

“It is important that we develop a regional roadmap with water agencies, counties, cities, and the State to solve our long term water needs,” said Costa. “As a result of recent court decisions, as well as projected population growth, we are facing more demand for finite supplies. We must solve water issues on a regional basis with our neighboring counties. I am thrilled the subcommittee discussed this bill today, and hope it will be marked up in the full committee in the near future.”

Costa spoke yesterday at the hearing to present H.R. 2498, and spoke of the severe drought Mother Nature has inflicted on the Valley, and the man made drought the Valley is suffering from due to water being taken away by other regions in the state.

“In California, it's either feast or famine; we either have more water than we can deal with, or we have drought conditions. We had 28% of normal precipitation and snow pack last year, and if this trend continues this winter, it will pale in comparison to previous droughts. This, coupled with man-made droughts, caused by judicial and legislative decisions which have reallocated water from the San Joaquin Valley to benefit other parts of the State, puts California in a perfect storm,” Costa told the subcommittee.

The Integrated Regional Water Management Planning Act, authored by Costa while he was serving in the California State Senate, was first enacted at the state level in September 2002. The goal of the legislation was the formation of regional water management groups to enact regional plans to address long-term water needs. The San Joaquin Valley faces critical water shortages coupled with quality issues. Add to that groundwater overdraft, unreliable surface water availability, conveyance issues as well as environmental restoration and flood control issues, the time is now to act for the Valley's needs into the next 30 to 50 years.

Local water officials believe that Federal involvement in the water planning process is needed and appropriate, primarily because many of the water related issues of late are related to the Federal actions; either agency policies or court decisions. Much of the supplies for the southern part of the San Joaquin Valley are operated or controlled by the Bureau of Reclamation, or the Army Corps of Engineers. H.R. 2498 would bring these Federal agencies into the local water planning process and authorize \$1 million in Federal funds, to be provided through the Bureau of Reclamation.

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